

June 16, 2019

Sermon Manuscript

Acts 8:4-25

⁴ Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵ Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. ⁶ And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. ⁷ For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸ So there was much joy in that city.

⁹ But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. ¹⁰ They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." ¹¹ And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. ¹² But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³ Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

¹⁴ Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, ¹⁵ who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶ for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." ²⁰ But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! ²¹ You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. ²² Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³ For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." ²⁴ And Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

²⁵ Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

1 Corinthians 12:1-13

¹ Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

Luke 3:21-22, 4:1-14

^{3:21} Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."...

^{4:1} And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ² for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. ³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." ⁴ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

⁵ And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶ and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and

their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸ And Jesus answered him, “It is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.”

⁹ And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰ for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,” ¹¹ and “On their

hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

¹² And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³ And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

¹⁴ And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.

Holy Spirit, Part 2: On Supernatural Gifts & Experiences

Today will be the second of a two-part sermon series on the Holy Spirit. Those who were here for part one last week will recall that we addressed the question or debate of how many baptisms a Christian should expect. And the orthodox Christian position has historically been that there is one baptism, as Paul says in Ephesians 4, “There is...one Lord, one faith, (and) one baptism...” (vv4-5)^a But we compared this to the view dominant in Pentecostalism and much of Charismaticism that teaches there are 2 separate baptisms, first a baptism with water and then a baptism of the Holy Spirit at a later time, typically believed to be signified by the gift of tongues. Well, with the help of Frederick Dale Bruner^b, I showed how careful interpretation of scripture affirms one can be assured of the full reception of the Holy Spirit with faith and only the single baptism; while there was insufficient support for the two baptism view. But I also explained how, even if one wants to quibble about the proper understanding of this scripture or that, because a second baptism doctrine inevitably makes a demand on believers in excess of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone this makes it incompatible with the biblical gospel. #

But for part two today, I want to turn our attention now to the subject of supernatural spiritual gifts and experiences, and consider what the boundaries are for maintaining a godly and biblical mindset toward these things.

Now, this past week many of our Life Groups looked at that excerpt from Acts chapter 8 – specifically verses 14-17 – to consider how to reconcile what happens in this instance with the broader biblical witness of a single baptism. But today our first lesson includes the larger context around that episode in Samaria, which tells of an interaction between the apostles and a man known as Simon the Magician. And we quickly learn that this Simon had lived his life as a self-promoting egoist, as verse 9 says he was known for telling others how great he was. Indeed, he survived off of being this way, as he was a practitioner of magic, which required he project an abundance of self-confidence. Now, to grasp what a magician was in those days we should think less David Copperfield and more something like a sorcerer or a modern-day psychic, who seeks to perform supernatural wonders for their own financial enrichment.^c

^a Ephesians 4:4-6 - ⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—* ⁵ *one Lord, one faith, one baptism,* ⁶ *one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

^b Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, Eerdmans: 1974.

^c Craig Keener: “Magicians usually drew large followings in antiquity; given the prominence of Jewish magicians in Greco-Roman antiquity, a Samaritan magician should not surprise us; Samaria had even more Greek influences than Judea. Like the Old Testament, official leaders in mainstream Judaism opposed magic, but later magical papyri show considerable Jewish influence, and even a minority of later rabbis reportedly indulged in something like sorcery, claiming simply to exploit insight into the secrets of God’s laws of creation. Whether someone was called a miracle-worker or a magicians often depended on whether the writer liked him, but in general magicians were thought to act less publicly and particularly to act more for personal gain.” (342)

And yet, the passage reports that when the Apostle Philip had come to Samaria performing signs (v6-7) and preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and what God had done in Christ (v12), this Simon was among the Samaritans who believed and were baptized! However, in the case of these Samaritan converts, we also “have the only record in the New Testament of persons who believed, accepted Christian baptism, and had nevertheless *not yet* received the Holy Spirit...” Now Bruner’s explanation for this is that God allowed for this anomaly of suspending the gift of the Holy Spirit for a short time in order to create an occasion for the Samaritans to be brought into communion with a Church that to this point had been *comprised solely of Jews* – sworn enemies of the Samaritans – through having the head Apostle Peter (& John) come and impart the gift of the Holy Spirit to them by praying (v15) and laying hands upon them (v17).

Well, when Simon sees Peter and John do this, he takes it to mean that there *is* a separate or further gift of the Holy Spirit; that this Christian thing offers is some additional power to be had.^d So, (operating in his old self) Simon offers the Apostles money, saying in verse 19, “Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” But Peter immediately rebukes him, saying, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!” Now, this word ‘obtain’ Peter uses in verse 20 is key, because everywhere else the book of Acts describes the Holy Spirit as being ‘received’^e, but here we find Peter using a different Greek word meaning ‘to obtain’^f. So the way we should understand what’s going on here is that this Simon perceives there is a next level to Christianity that gives one special power, and *he wants to obtain it*; to give something in return for it,^g so he can monetize it, just as he had with his magic powers before. But don’t be distracted by the crassness of Simon’s offer of money; his deeper problem is that instead of being satisfied to receive the simple gift of God through faith. Simon covets spiritual power for himself; and he is fully willing to move beyond simple faith – and into the realm of payment or works – in order to acquire it.

Now, while this passage from Acts certainly indicates that God’s work in the world can include the supernatural, Peter & John’s interaction with Simon the Magician serves as a warning to believers against *seeking out* the supernatural with impure motives or being inappropriately fixated on the miraculous, whether it be supernatural spiritual experiences or spiritual gifts. But how can we know where those boundaries are? So I want to explore what priority should we give to the supernatural in our spiritual lives; and whether there can there be good reasons to seek out or ask for spiritual gifts or experiences; and how we would distinguish them from the bad reasons?

Well, the Apostles’ response to Simon the Magician is pretty clearly a reproach of seeking spiritual power to advance oneself. But to identify some other ways that a fixation on the supernatural can be problematic, I want to turn to our Second Lesson this morning from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians.

Even though many of us have read chapters 12 to 14 of First Corinthians countless times, we may not have been aware that Paul’s **primary purpose** in this section of the letter is to address a preoccupation with the charismata – or the supernatural spiritual gifts – that has arisen in the Corinthian Church. So, in verse 1 of our passage from chapter 12, Paul says, “I don’t want you to be uninformed about spiritual gifts.” And then he proceeds to address some poor motives he thinks these Corinthian Christians might have.

^d Simon fails to understand that the gift of becoming a Christian is solely the gift of God himself.

^e Greek *lambanein*

^f Greek *ktasthai*. In all three cases of *ktasthai* (obtain) in Acts the procuring is connected with a price paid

^g Romans 11:35-36 “Or who has given a gift to (God) that he might be repaid?” [implied answer = no one] ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

And what Paul addresses first is the mistaken notion that supernatural spiritual gifts – such as speaking in tongues – can serve as **evidence** of God’s approval or the **assurance** of salvation. Now, what he says in verse 2 can be a little hard to grasp, but Paul is reminding these Corinthian Christians that before they came to Christ, they had been worshippers of false gods^h and it was not uncommon for this worship to include ecstatic or spiritual experiences!ⁱ So Paul’s point is that, if they had these spiritual experiences when worshipping false gods, having spiritual experiences now that they are in Christ cannot therefore be taken as proof that one is operating in God’s will. Instead, in verse 3 Paul is suggesting that something much more ordinary, like a person’s words, is a much more *reliable* indicator of the state of their relationship with God.^j And this is consistent with what Jesus taught, that “out of the mouth come the things of the heart” (Mt 15:18). But Paul will develop this point further in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 (quoted on your bulletin insert). In that famous chapter on love,^k - you know, “⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude...” and “¹³ faith, hope, and love abide... but the greatest of these is love” – the whole point of that chapter is that the fruits of the Spirit – which Paul elsewhere identifies as “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control,”^l but can be summed up with the word love – that the fruits of the Spirit are the real evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work within a person. The best evidence for the Holy Spirit in someone’s life is an increase in love toward one’s neighbor and in love toward God (e.g. by overcoming sin), *not the spiritual gifts*. #

So having ruled out the supernatural spiritual gifts as evidence of the Spirit, in the second paragraph Paul then debunks any notion that supernatural spiritual gifts indicate a person’s superiority over other believers, or that they are more approved of by God. To make this point:

- In verse 4 he insists that the variety of gifts are all from the same Spirit;
- Then, in verse 7 he suggests that the primary purpose of the gifts is not to benefit the individual, but the (quote) “common good”;
 - And this is the point he takes up in Chapter 14 (also quoted from on your bulletin insert), when he famously teaches that a gift like prophesy is of much more value than tongues, because of its greater potential to build up others in the church.^m

^h Corinth was known for having many temples to pagan gods, including Apollo, Aphrodite, and others.

ⁱ Quote keeper 485

^j Christians should not, however employ 1 Cor 12:3 literally as some sort of fool-proof test of faith. To that point, one could certainly imagine Adolf Hitler being was physically and intellectually capable of uttering the words “Jesus is Lord” without having the accompanying faith.

^k 1 Corinthians 13 - ¹ *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

⁴ *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things...*

^l Galatians 5:22-23 - ²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

^m 1 Corinthians 14 – ¹ *Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. ² For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. ³ On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. ⁴ The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. ⁵ Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.”*

- But then, back to our passage from chapter 12, next Paul lists some of the spiritual gifts – though not all of them; he lists others in Romans 12ⁿ and elsewhere^o – but in verse 8-10 here he lists both miraculous and unmiraculous gifts all together^p;
- and then in verse 11 he explains that the Holy Spirit apportions these gifts in accordance with his will, not to distinguish the more spiritual believers from the less spiritual.

Thus, what we learn from Paul here is that while we may encounter or experience the supernatural elements in our faith, the supernatural is not the goal. The goal of the Christian life is love – to transform our hearts to be more and more like Christ in love toward God and our neighbor. So the criticism Paul is levelling against the Corinthians' pursuit of spiritual experiences is that it is essentially another version of the broad way of living that most people seek, as it is ultimately about feeding one's own ego.^q So instead, Paul exhorts them to seek to follow the narrow and much more difficult way that Christ leads, the way of patient love. ## ## ##

But what can make it so tempting to pursue the supernatural? Well, to discover some answers to that I want to turn, for a few minutes, to our gospel passage from Luke 3 and 4. The excerpt from chapter 3 is Luke's account of Jesus' baptism, an episode which we looked at last week from Matthew's gospel. But chapter 4 shows that *immediately after* being baptized,^r the Holy Spirit leads Jesus out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Now, most of you have probably encountered this passage enough to be familiar with what happens next, and the three ways Satan tempts Jesus. First, he tempts Jesus to satiate his hunger by turning stones into bread; second, Satan offers Jesus the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worshipping him; and third, Satan tempts Jesus to throw himself off of the pinnacle of the temple to allow God's angels to rescue him. Well, interestingly, Bruner suggests there is a parallel between these three temptations Jesus resists and common motivations among believers for becoming fixated on the supernatural.

You'll notice that Satan begins each of the temptations with "If you are the Son of God..." So with the first temptation is for Jesus is challenged to do something miraculous – to turn stones into bread – to provide evidence he is the Son of God. So what Satan is calling into question here is whether Jesus is truly loved and accepted by the Father. But recall what has just happened at Jesus' baptism. The Holy Spirit descended on him and God the Father said from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." And Jesus is able to resist this temptation and be satisfied with the assurance of his baptism. But we are so much more vulnerable to doubt whether God really does love and accept us. So, instead of being assured by our baptism or by the fruit of His Spirit in our lives, we may seek to for God to give us something more – *some proof* – like some supernatural sign, just like Paul observes in the Corinthian Christians (12:2-3). But Jesus taught in Matthew 16

ⁿ Romans 12:4-8 – *"4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."*

^o Ephesians 4:11ff is often read as a list of spiritual gifts. Elsewhere gifts of Celibacy, Hospitality, Martyrdom, Missionary, Voluntary Poverty, Discerning of Spirits, Craftsmanship/Artist, Music, and Writing are mentioned.

^p Craig Keener suggests that "utterance of knowledge" in verse 8 probably does not refer to "word of knowledge", as is sometimes suggested, because "word of knowledge" would instead fall under the gift of prophesy. Keener also explains that "the ability to distinguish between spirits" in verse 10 was likely the ability to judge prophecies as from God or not.

^q Matthew 7:13-14 – *"13 Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."*

^r The rest of Luke chapter 3 (vv23-28) is Luke's genealogy of Christ.

that it is “an evil and adulterous generation (that) seeks for a sign.”^s And while Jesus teaches in John 14 about those who are unable to receive the Holy Spirit because they cannot see him,^t he then teaches in John 20: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”^u So we are called to trust that by virtue of merely our faith and the outwardly unsensational event of baptism we have been made children of God.

Now, the second temptation is not for Jesus to do something miraculous per se, but rather to seek power and advance himself. So *this* temptation parallels the sin of Simon the Magician from Acts 8, who despite coming to believe in Christ ultimately proved to be more interested in advancing his own kingdom rather than God’s. So this could serve as a warning to the wonder-working televangelists and itinerant preachers – even pastors and churches – who use promises of miraculous healings and blessings to exploit the poor and vulnerable and advance ministries that serve themselves more than the kingdom of God. But Jesus’ response to Satan in verse 8 is to affirm that the aim of his life is to serve God, rather than himself.^v Jesus believes that as long as he concerns himself with glorifying the Father, then the Father will worry about glorying him.^w And this mentality is what enabled Jesus to remain faithful even unto death, because he trusted God would vindicate him, and the resurrection did just that.

Well finally, Satan’s third temptation is for Jesus to induce a miracle by throwing himself off the pinnacle of the temple, which would certainly create quite the spectacle! And in this we find a parallel to what Paul is attempting to discourage in verses 4-11 of 1 Corinthians 12, which is the desire to seek out the supernatural in order to be impressive or appear superior. But there are some in Pentecostalism who insist that displays of divine power and glory are valuable for bringing others to faith. They point out that if Jesus, and later the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, used miracles to bring others to faith, shouldn’t we also?^x The problem with this argument is that *even Jesus’* miracles were not all that successful in leading people to faith. One thinks of John chapter 6, where Jesus feeds the 5,000, but by the end of that chapter almost everyone but his twelve disciples had deserted him.^y What if the purpose of Jesus’ signs was not so much to impress people into believing but to instead bring about revelation: by revealing truths about His identity or about the kingdom & salvation he offered?

^s Matthew 16:4 – *“An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.”* So he left them and departed.” (see also Mt 12:38-42)

^t John 14:17 – *“...¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”*

^u John 20:29 *“²⁹ Jesus said to (Thomas), “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

^v *“You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.”*

^w Jesus says in John 8:54, *“If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’”* And Jesus prays to the Father in John 17: *“⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.”*

^x Mark 16:17-18 reads: *“¹⁷ And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”*

It is often pointed to as supporting the doctrine of initial evidence of the Spirit by tongues, when in fact these verses are part of a passage (Mark 16:9-20) that is likely not original to Mark and was likely not written until the second century. In light of this, verses 17-18 seem to be describing events that are recorded elsewhere as occurring in the early life of the Church (see sermon from 6/2/19). Moreover, Bruner contends that if it is insisted that Mark 16:17 be used for the doctrine of the initial evidence of the Spirit by tongues then, consistently, Mark 16:18 must also be employed for the initial evidence of the Spirit by one or two poison immunities.

^y John 6 ⁶⁵ (Jesus) went on to say, *“This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.”* ⁶⁶ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

But even at Pentecost, when 3,000 end up coming to faith and being baptized in Acts chapter 2, yes the Apostles were miraculously enabled to speak to those people in their own languages, but it wasn't being impressed by this miracle that ultimately caused people to believe, but rather the content of the gospel that was preached to them. Even in Acts 8 that we read today, Philip *had* performed signs and healed the sick (vv6-7), but people actually come to faith through his preaching (v12). Faith does not come from being impressed by signs and wonders, but rather from the Holy Spirit moving on people's hearts when they hear the Good News. As Paul says, "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."^z

However, entire evangelism strategies have been based upon impressing people into the faith.^{aa} But in great contrast to this, Bruner suggests that we should instead expect the Church and individual believers to actually expect to seem outwardly unimpressive and full of weakness, *and embrace it!* He writes,

"But instead of despising these weaknesses in the church – as the crucified Messiah himself was despised... – Christians are called upon, with the particular and unique gifts (1 Cor 12), patiently and compassionately (1 Cor 13) to seek one thing for this always somewhat offensive and generally rather unimpressive institution (of the Church) – its upbuilding (1 Cor 14)."

– building up the church – For from the perspective of "faith this unimpressive entity is the body of Christ." (318) ## ## ##

But we've spent a lot of time this morning identifying *bad reasons* for seeking out or asking for supernatural experiences or spiritual gifts: such as to make ourselves seem impressive, or advance ourselves, or as evidence that God loves and accepts us. But could there also be good reasons to seek such things out? Well, yes, there are.

The final two passages on your insert this morning are from Paul's writings to Timothy, who apprenticed as a Pastor under Paul and whom Paul called his "beloved and faithful child in the Lord".^{bb} And there Paul exhorts Timothy (quote) "do not neglect the gift you have"^{cc} and (quote) "I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God."^{dd} And from this, all of us should take encouragement to seek to 1) discern any gifts the Spirit may have given to us, so that 2) we might use them for the of God and the building up of His Church. But our governing principle for the right use of any spiritual gifts – miraculous or not – is that they should always be in service of loving God or our neighbor.^{ee} And according to Paul, this principle means we should seek out or ask for tongues the least of all.^{ff}

But rest assured that the Holy Spirit desires that we open ourselves to work in and through every one of us. But whether He chooses to do that miraculously or not is entirely up to Him. Bruner observes that the final verse of our gospel passage, despite having just rejected all of Satan's

^z Romans 10:17

^{aa} This really sets people up for buyer's remorse, by promising would-be-converts healings or spiritual power rather than a difficult journey of learning to die to self and being transformed more into the image of Christ.

^{bb} 1 Corinthians 4:17, 1 Timothy 1:2

^{cc} 1 Timothy 4:13-14 - ¹³ *Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.* ¹⁴ *Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.*

^{dd} 2 Timothy 1:6-7 - ⁶ *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,* ⁷ *for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

^{ee} Mt 22:37-40

^{ff} 1 Cor 14:5,12 – ⁵ *Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up...* ¹² *So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church."*

temptations to mis-use or grasp for the supernatural, verse 14 reports that Jesus nonetheless returned from the desert “in the power of the Spirit”, which just goes to show once again that being full of the Spirit does not necessitate supernatural manifestations.

But as believers, we must not neglect the Holy Spirit within us. So let us ask the Lord to bestow upon us gifts for service, as well as the wisdom to discern any gifts he may have already imparted to us, that we might begin to fan them into flames that further His kingdom on earth.

In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

